



## THE GOLD and SILVER SPOTTER

*Weather Spotter News for Eastern California and Western Nevada*  
National Weather Service / Reno, Nevada / Spring & Summer 2006



### Hello!

Hello spotters! Thanks for all your observations and reports this past winter season. The National Weather Service looks forward to your continued vigilance and assistance for the upcoming thunderstorm season. Remember, you are the eyes and ears of the National Weather Service. Even with the extensive tools of modern technology such as Doppler radar, satellites, web cameras, and surface observations, there are still wide gaps in information in what is actually happening on the ground. Your reports **directly** help in saving life and property and in bridging the gap between what we see with instruments and what is actually occurring across northeast California and western Nevada.

#### Spotter Classes

May 10 @ 7 PM –  
Mammoth Lakes

May 17 @ 7 PM –  
Tahoe City

May 18 @ 7 PM –  
Carson City

May 24 @ 7 PM –  
Susanville

May 31 @ 7 PM –  
Fallon

June 3 @ 10 AM –  
Carson City

#### Spotter Training Classes in May/June

Meteorologists from the National Weather Service in Reno will be hosting six weather spotter classes in May and early June for our new weather spotters and for those spotters who would like a refresher. The classes will cover topics like tornadoes, the thunderstorm life cycle, thunderstorm downbursts, flooding, and what types of weather to report. The classes will last around 90 minutes with the last 15 minutes of each session set aside for questions. If you know of a location in your area that would be a good site to host a future weather spotter class, let us know.

Directions to the training can be found at the end of this newsletter or on our website at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/rev>. If you need a spotter guide, you can go to our website or pick one up at a training session. Please contact Wendell Hohmann or Rhett Milne ([Wendell.Hohmann@noaa.gov](mailto:Wendell.Hohmann@noaa.gov) or [Rhett.Milne@noaa.gov](mailto:Rhett.Milne@noaa.gov)) if you have any questions.

#### 2005-2006 Winter Weather Highlights

*Mark Deutschendorf, Forecaster*

**1. December 31, Widespread Flooding including Reno and Carson City areas.** The series of storms during late December culminated with very heavy rainfall on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Snow levels remained above 8500 feet during most of this storm. Rainfall totals of 4 to 8 inches in the Lake Tahoe Basin and northeast California, and 2-6 inches in Reno and Carson City caused the Susan, Pit, Truckee and Carson Rivers to exceed flood stage. Flooding caused several roads to be closed in Reno and Carson City including two bridges in downtown Reno. Homes and businesses were flooded in lowlands and near streams in Reno and east Sparks and west of Carson City. Mud and rock slides on Interstate 80 and Highway 89 resulted in closures of those roads. A sinkhole which formed south of Virginia City on highway 342 resulted in a prolonged closure of that road. Urban and lowland flooding was also reported for the Lake Tahoe basin and for northeast California including Bieber, Sierraville, and Susanville. Several million dollars of damage and cleanup costs resulted from *the most widespread flooding since the New Years Day flood of 1997*.



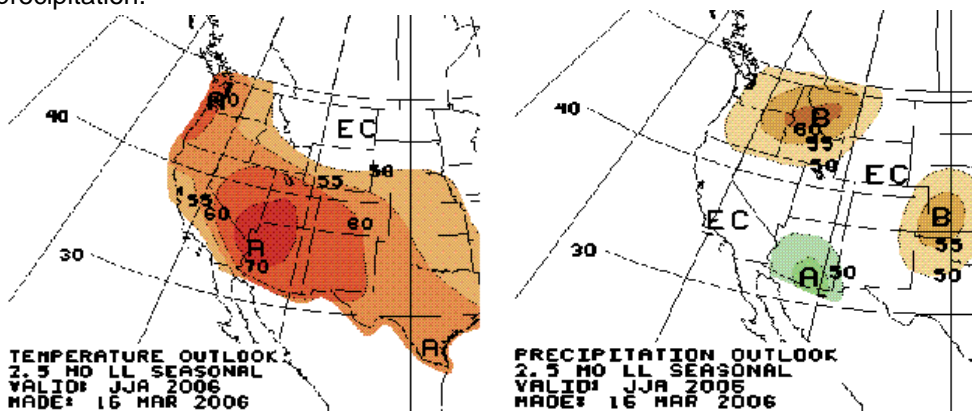
**2. January 1-2, Winter Storm with Extreme Snowfall in Mono County.** The last of a series of powerful storms which began battering the region in late December 2005 produced heavy snow in the mountains and heavy rain in the valleys then changed to wet snow during the day on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. While snow totals were significant in the Lake Tahoe basin with 8-16 inches at lake level and up to 3 feet in the mountains, the most notable snowfall occurred in Mono County. Extreme snowfall rates of 3 to over 4 inches per hour at times resulted in 36 hour snowfall totals of 2 to 3 feet along the highway 395 corridor south of Bridgeport, with 4 to 5 feet in Mammoth Lakes, and an astounding 8 feet of snowfall at Mammoth Mountain. Numerous avalanches were reported in Mono County closing Highway 395 south of Bridgeport for several days. In lower elevations, 1-2 inches of rain was followed by 3-6 inches of snow in the Reno and Carson City areas, with local amounts up to 12 inches in Virginia City. Up to 3 inches of snow fell east of Reno to Lovelock.

**3. March 1-15, Unseasonably Cold with numerous snow events.** A series of winter storms produced 3 to 6 feet of snow in the Lake Tahoe basin and over 10 feet of snow in the high Sierra. The heaviest snows for the lower elevations occurred March 2-3 and March 14, with 4-8 inches of snow and 3-6 inches, respectively, for the Reno foothills and North Valleys. Meanwhile, parts of Lassen County below 5000 feet received a whopping 9-13 inches on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The coldest contiguous period was March 10-12 when temperatures remained below 40 degrees in many western Nevada valleys with snow showers producing light snow accumulations each day, with locally heavier amounts in lake effect snow downwind of Lake Tahoe (yep, lake effect is not confined to the Great Lakes!).

## 2006 Summer Temperature and Precipitation Outlook

*Shane Snyder, Forecaster*

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) released their latest update on the outlook for the 2006 summer season. The ENSO (El Nino/Southern Oscillation) cycle is currently in a weak La Nina pattern, which is expected to persist through summer. This is expected to have weak to negligible effect on the region's weather, as the ENSO cycle mainly affects winter weather (when the jet stream is strongest). The forecasts below indicate that the best shot for above normal temperatures will be over southeast Nevada and Utah and Arizona, where there is a 70% chance from June through August. This is due to the history of persistent above normal temperatures in recent years. For our region, there is a 55 to 60% chance of above normal temperatures (versus a 40 to 45% chance for below normal). For rainfall, there are no signals for our region for either above or below...with signals for a slightly stronger monsoon this summer ramping up Arizona's chance for above normal precipitation.



**\*\*Check out the CPC home page for oodles and oodles of climate data\*\***

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>



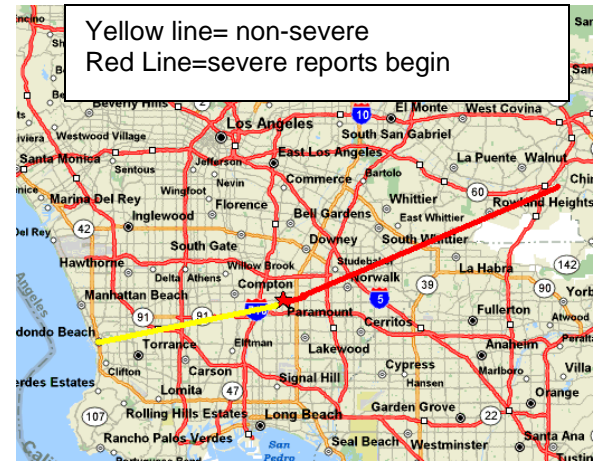
## Spotter Success Story

*Shane Snyder, Forecaster*

On April 18, 2000 the Los Angeles Basin was hit by an exceptionally severe thunderstorm for the region. Between 3:30 AM and 4:15 AM, the storm produced damage in a swath three-quarters of a mile wide and 25 miles long. Timely reports by spotters indicated winds between 80 and 100 MPH. In Paramount, over 30 mobile homes sustained structural damage with even one mobile home blown over. Along the storm path, widespread structural damage was reported to homes and businesses, including the destruction of chimneys and concrete walls. In Norwalk, a 100 foot eucalyptus tree was blown down across Interstate 5, closing all southbound lanes for over three hours.

### Spotter role:

Just after 3:00 AM, a spotter called to report hail in the coastal community of Redondo Beach. This report gave ground truth to what meteorologists saw with Doppler radar as a rapidly intensifying storm and was instrumental in tipping the decision to issue a Severe Thunderstorm Warning at 3:15 AM. This gave anywhere from 15 to 55 minutes of lead time on the approaching storm. With winds of 80 to 100 MPH (equivalent to an F0 to F1 tornado), 15+ minutes was crucial in giving residents time to take life-saving action, especially for those in less stable structures such as mobile homes. In addition, the spotter reports along the path of the storm (see map) were irreplaceable in helping meteorologists verify the intensity of the storm.



**So what is the moral of the story?** Spotters who are alert in a potential severe weather situation can mean the difference between taking potentially life-saving action or not, even in areas not known for widespread severe weather. Check the Hazardous Weather Outlook via NOAA weather radio or the National Weather Service website for situations where your help could make the crucial difference.

## What should you report?

Thank you for your assistance this past winter. As we head through spring and into summer, we have a few tips.

- Please let us know about any reports of damage you receive, even if it is days later. Doing so helps us improve our warning program by showing us areas where we might be over-warning or under-warning.
- During an active weather day, we are often quite busy monitoring radar, tracking observations, and taking phone calls. When you observe weather fitting any of the criteria, please call us right away. Do not wait for us to call you, as we may never get the chance. ***Please be proactive!***
- See the next page for spotter reporting criteria. **Remember; if you aren't sure...report it anyway!**

**Reminders:** Now is the time to check and replace the batteries in your weather radio. Even though severe weather occurs infrequently, the story above is a good reminder of the importance of having an operating NOAA weather radio! Also, if you plan on leaving the area for a few days, feel free to give your neighbor a copy of the reporting criteria and the phone number to call. We would rather have an untrained person give a report than to not receive a report at all.



## Spotter Reporting Criteria – Summer Season

1. Tornado or Funnel Cloud
2. Winds over 45 MPH
3. Hail of any size
4. Heavy Rainfall (0.25 inch or more in 1 hour)
5. Flooding

**\*\*Please refer to your Storm Spotter Guide (available at our website or at training) for more in-depth information\*\***

## Spotter Training Locations and Times

### Mammoth Lakes: May 10<sup>th</sup> @ 7 PM

Mammoth Ranger Station/Visitor Center  
2500 Main St., Mammoth Lakes, CA

- Take Highway 395 to CA203. If coming from 395 North, **DO NOT TAKE SCENIC LOOP!**
- Go west into the town of Mammoth Lakes. Ranger Station/Visitor Center is on right (get ready to turn into driveway immediately after sign that says “24-hour Lodging Information”).

### Tahoe City: May 17<sup>th</sup> @ 7 PM

Coast Guard Building  
2500 Lake Forest Rd., Tahoe City, CA

- Located just off Route 28 near Tahoe City. From Reno, take Mt. Rose Highway to Incline Village and make a right onto 28 (towards Kings Beach/Tahoe City).

### Carson City: May 18<sup>th</sup> @ 7 PM and June 3<sup>rd</sup> @ 10 AM

Carson City Fire Department #2 Training Room  
2350 College Parkway, Carson City, NV

- From Highway 395, turn east onto College Parkway. Go about 1 1/2 miles and turn left into Fire Station #2 (next to the airport). Classroom is on the left hand side (**NOT** in the Fire Station Building).

NOTE: This road (College Parkway) was recently changed...online searches will show 2350 Graves Lane.

### Susanville: May 24<sup>th</sup> @ 7 PM

Susanville Fire Department  
1505 Main St., Susanville, CA

- Right in downtown Susanville on CA Route 36/Main St.

### Fallon: May 31<sup>st</sup> @ 7 PM

Western Nevada Community College, Pinon Hall #209  
160 Campus Way, Fallon, NV

- From US-50, turn onto Commercial Way (right from east of Fallon, left from west of Fallon).
- Turn right on Auction Rd., then left onto Campus Way.